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ABSTRACT

A study was made to determine if a relationship could be found between the self-concept and academic achievement of 65 kindergarten children. Subjects were tested using the Bracken Basic Concept Scale, and 18 items from the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. Of the subjects, 37 were white, 25 were black, and 3 were from other groups. Thirty children were receiving remedial assistance. The Bracken scale was administered to measure academic achievement in the areas of colors, letter identification, number and countng, comparisons, and shapes. Piers-Harris items on intellectual and school status only were administered to assess self-concept. Contrary to findings of previous studies, a correlation was found between self-concept and academic achievement of kindergarten children. Correlations were also found between achievement and race, remedial assistance and race, sex and race, and achievement and remedial assistance. (RH)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of Kindergarten students exists. Sixty-five Kindergarten students were tested using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Bracken Basic Concept Scale. The study revealed that there is a correlation between self-concept and academic achievement of Kindergarten students. A correlation was also evident between achievement and race as well as between remedial assistance and race.

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INTRODUCTION

Educators and parents alike want to provide the best learning atmosphere for all children. This includes establishing a positive environment as well as a defined curriculum. Establishing a positive environment includes developing a child's self-concept. Self-concept is a person's view about him or herself and how others view them. A strong, positive attitude is a sign of a happy and healthy child. Curriculum and academic achievement are significant in a child's school success. The definition of academic achievement used by the researcher is based on a student's ability to succeed in accordance with the curriculum guidelines.

How does self-concept relate to academic achievement? It has been known that students who exhibit a low self-concept are reserved and shy, while students who exhibit a high self-concept are self-assured and show leadership. Many educators say that a child's feelings about him or herself are the key factors in school achievement. Personality theorists also claim that a child must "believe in himself" in order to successfully perform in school.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of Kindergarten students. Secondary purposes were to identify relationships between sex, race, and those Kindergarten students who are receiving remedial assistance.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of the related literature revealed that many research studies have been conducted dealing with self-concept and academic achievement. However, a relationship between the two constructs has yet to be clearly defined.

According to Pottebaum, Keith,and Ehly (1986), self- concept and academic achievement are caused by a "third variable". That third variable could possibly be; race, social class, or ability level. There was early evidence of this in the 1960's when there was a relationship of self-concept and academic achievement and race. Due to this relationship, intervention programs evolved such as HEAD START. This is still an on going program. There isn't any evidence that indicates that intervention programs have led to improved self-concept of higher academic achievement. (Pottebaum etal, 1986)

Strain (1983) conducted a study with self-concept and behaviors of Kindergarten students. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in self-concept scores among high verses low rated students. This possibly could mean that low rated students have an inability to make accurate self-appraisals. Many times students perceive how they want to be (desired behavior), rather than how they are at the present time. The similar scores of the high/low rated students show that one assessment of self-concept does not necessarily mean that these students need intervention.

According to findings by Stipek (1981), self-appraisals of younger children may be inaccurate due to limited verbal and vocabulary skills. Kugle and Clements (1980) found that the level and stability of self-concept were found to be positively related to the level of achievement of second grade students.

Several developmental studies have found that students' ratings of their own achievement do not begin to correlate with their actual performance until third or fourth grade.

Overall research dealing with self-concept and academic achievement of Kindergarten students has been negative. The majority of the studies reviewed indicate that a relationship does not exist between self-concept and academic achievement of Kindergarten students.

STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESIS

The review of the related literature suggests that Kindergarten students are unable to make an accurate self-appraisal. Therefore, a concrete relationship between self-concept and academic achievement is highly unlikely. However, the "third variable" as mentioned earlier may be a factor in the results of academic achievement.

METHOD

SUBJECTS

The participants of this study were taken from a convienent sample of Kindergarten students from Monroe Elementary School in the Sandusky School District.

There were sixty-five students who participated in this study. Thirty of them were female and thirty-five were male. On a racial basis, thirty-seven

were white, twenty-five were black, and three were Hispanic or other. There were also thirty students who were receiving Kindergarten remedial assistance.

INSTRUMENTS

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (The Way I Feel About Myself) was used to measure self-concept. The Piers-Harris is designed to measure attitudes and self-perceptions in these areas: behavior, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity, happiness and satisfaction. There are eighty items in which the participant answers "yes" or "no". The internal consistency ranges from .78-.93. Validity differs according to age level the test is administered.

Due to time limitations as well as the number of subjects, the researcher only administered the sub area of intellectual and school status. There were eighteen items in which the participant put an "X" on a happy face (yes) or a sad face (no). (See Appendix)

The Bracken Basic Concept Scale was administered as a measurement of academic achievement for the Kindergarten students. The Bracken is designed to measure five subareas. They are: colors, letter identification, number/counting, comparisons, and shapes. There are sixty-one items in which the participant points to the picture that answers the question or statement. Validity coefficients range from .42-.48 and reliability coefficients range from .76-.80. Data indicates that a screening test such as the Bracken is reliable because it is short in length and that it has a high level of content validity (Bracken 1984).

PROCEDURE

Over a four week period the sixty-five Kindergarten students were administered the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Bracken Basic Concept Scale. Each test was administered individually to each student. The researcher met with each student twice. Once to administer the Piers-Harris and a second time to administer the Bracken.

Scoring procedures for the Piers-Harris were tabulated into a high/low self-concept using the raw score and converting it to a T score. Scoring procedures for the Bracken were also derived from using the raw score. The raw score (also called the school readiness composite), was converted to a standard score, which was them converted to a percentile rank and finally into a concept age. (Appendix A - Bracken 1984). The concept age is the result of the student's performance. T scores were also used in the results.

RESULTS

Reviewing the self-concept scores first, the results indicate that out of the sixty-five subjects tested, 17% rated low normal, 52% rated normal, and 31% of the subjects rated high normal self-concepts. The mean was 15.78 and the standard deviation was 2.236. The data collected from the achievement scores shows that 12% rated below average, 78% rated average, and 10% of the subjects rated above average academically. The mean was 51 and the standard deviation was 5.678.

The primary purpose of the study was to determine if a relationship existed between self-concept and academic achievement. The correlation coefficient was .4570 and the .05 level. Focusing on the secondary purposes such as race, sex, and remedial assistance the results are as follows;

self-concept and sex = .1730, self-concept and remedial assistance = -.1167, self-concept and race = .1500, achievement and sex = .1087, achievement and race = .5302, achievement and remedial assistance = .2446, sex and remedial assistance = -.1761, sex and race = -8.443, remedial assistance and race = .2659. All correlation coefficients are from the .05 level.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship between self-concept and academic achievement existed among Kindergarten students. The study relied on scores form the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Bracken Basic Concept Scale.

There have been previous studies which have indicated that a relationship does not exist between self-concept and academic achievement of Kindergarten students. However, the results recieved from this study suggest that there is a correlation between the two constructs, self-concept and academic achievement. There is also a correlation between achievement and race, remedial assistance and race, sex and race, and achievement and remedial assistance.

Reviewing the results of this study, the researcher realizes that one group of test scores does not clearly define the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of Kindergarten students. There are too many negative aspects to consider. As mentioned in the review of related literature, Kindergarten students may have a difficult time giving accurate self-appraisals. Also the fact that a convienent sample of students was used as well as a small number of subjects. And yet another factor is that only the intellectual and school status area of the Piers-Harris was used in the study. It is the opinion of the researcher that the results are

only a relatively small indicator of any relationship between the two constructs. Perhaps if the entire Piers-Harris were implemented, the subjects could then be retested for significant correlations.

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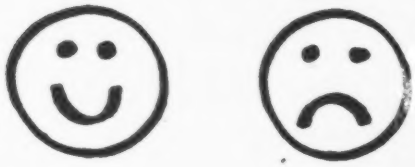
THE PIERS-HARRIS CHILDREN'S SELF CONCEPT SCALE

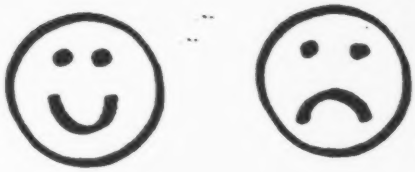
APPENDIX

1. I am smart.

2. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me.

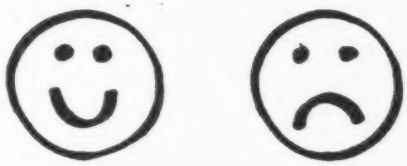


3. When I grow up I will be an important person.



4. I am unpopular.

5. I am well behaved in school.



6. I have good ideas.

7. I am an important member of my family.

8. I am good in my school work.

9. I am slow in finishing my work.

10. I am an important member of my class.

11. I can give a good report in front of the class.

12. My friends like my ideas.

13. I often volunteer in school.

14. My classmates in school think I have good ideas.

15. I am dumb about most things.

16. I am popular with boys.

17. I forget what I learn.

18. I am a good reader.

FACTOR II

INTELLECTUAL AND SCHOOL STATUS

SCORE

BRACKEN BASIC CONCEPT ASSESSMENT — TEST SCORE

STUDENT'S NAME _____ AGE ___ yr. ___ mo. ___ das.

TESTER _____ SCHOOL _____

raw score | concept age

TEST #1

I. COLOR — SCORE

1. red
2. green
3. black
4. blue
5. white
6. pink
7. purple
8. brown
9. yellow
10. gray

II. LETTER IDENTIFICATION — SCORE

1. A
2. S
3. W
4. K
5. D
6. m
7. b
8. j
9. e
10. t

III. NUMBERS/COUNTING — SCORE

1. one bear
2. the one
3. the four
4. the five
5. the three
6. the two
7. the zero
8. three flowers
9. six ducks
10. nine bumblebees
11. the seven
12. the six
13. the eight
14. the nine

IV. COMPARISONS — SCORE

1. which fruit is different
2. which person is reading something other than a book
3. which boats are alike
4. which balloons are the same
5. which boxes are not the same
6. which cans are of equal size
7. which hats are identical

V. SHAPES — SCORE

1. the star
2. the circle
3. the triangle
4. the square
5. which is round
6. which children are in a line
7. which rope is straight
8. which ducks are in a row
9. the tube
10. in which box is there space
11. which toy is underlined
12. the curve
13. the cross
14. the oval
15. the diamond
16. the rectangle
17. the pyramid
18. the cube
19. the angle
20. diagonal